Wolcott Community Forest Committee, General Meeting, 6/8/23

Attending: Cate, Gordon, Mike Greene, Kurt, Roger, Gabe, DJ, Joe Cotton, Luke, Dave, Gilly, Kelly, Hayden, Maxfield, Dylan Hewitt

[There is a quorum.]

1. Call to Order (6:08pm)
2. Org Actions
    - Amendments
        - Dave:
            - sorry to see Maria go; diversity is important
            - my son is available to discuss mountain bike trails; may be here for the meeting
                - Gordon: if not available for the meeting, maybe schedule a special meeting
        - Cate
            - NRLT annual meeting on Sunday; you are all invited
    - Approve minutes
        - motion to table approving minutes until next meeting (Roger), second (Kate); passed unanimously
3. Public comment
    - none
4. Land purchase updates (TPL)
    - US Forest Service manager response
        - all projects have been processed, but waiting on final determination; could take up to 3 months
    - Phase 2 on Biddell property
        - waiting for Lamoille County planning commission to allocate funding
    - Affordable Housing
        - connected with ED David Mullen; assessing needs; in beginning stages
    - finalized agreement with contractor to remove cabin remains from Bourne property
        - site will be re-naturalized
            - Gordon: we may not find out for 2 more months?
                - Hayden: exactly; there were a large number of projects submitted
            - Gordon: any other options to consider?
                - Hayden: we feel confident, but there are other options
                    - WISPr program has just increased staffing, may be closer to considering our application
                    - other options would extend our timeline
                    - could also reapply next year, if necessary

- Luke: on Biddell parcel, reclamation of the old campsite occurs before town acquires it?
    - Hayden: yes, it is being cleaned up now before acquisition
        - Luke: what's the scope?
            - Hayden: accessing it from neighboring land to remove material
        - Luke: if there is a tractor going in, you will have a road which will lead to traffic
            - Hayden: access from the west (just north of artificial pond); won't be near public access or proposed kiosks; using existing forest roads; no planned changes to the topography; insurance coverage is secured and we have permissions form the landowners
- Gordon: any updates on VOREC grant for build out on school property?
    - Hayden: not that I'm aware of; some discussion about the location of a parking lot and a potential forest lane for the proposed wastewater project

5. New business
    - Comments from the hosted nature walk (in May)
        - Roger: thank you, Dave, for organizing it; we had a good time
        - Gabe: it was a good walk
        - Mike: the extent of the frost damage was concerning; most of those will die off, i.e. beech and ash; oak trees seem to be bouncing back
            - Luke: that's why diversity is so important; redundancy
6. Ongoing
    - Mapping subcommittee, update
        - Luke: device is back up and running
            - we have data that we can use; could benefit from more boots on the ground
            - Roger: did you touch base with Kate to confirm you have the most recent maps?
                - Luke: yes, they're in the Google drive; waiting on one map from the Bourne property
            - Gordon: did you see the latest survey that Kate sent by email of the Bourne property?
                - Luke: by Little River? yes; that's a GPS survey, which is helpful, but walking the property is important
            - Hayden: the survey done by Little River is the one we plan to use when we close on the property; I agree, that walking the boundaries is a good approach
    - Stewardship plan draft subcommittee, update
        - Adopt a definition for trapping

- Roger: read off state definitions (ref)
    - Kurt: also, leg-hold traps have recently been outlawed (must be have-a-heart); also, must be 75 feet from a trail
        - Roger: yes; also, any traps must be reported to the town
            - Mike: and must be checked daily
    - Luke: disclosure, I'm a licensed trapper. to do it right is complicated; traps must be selected for the task with the appropriate bait; was hoping that other trappers would come and speak to this as they live in town
        - Gordon: would you like to allocate more time at a future date to present information on trapping to the committee?
            - Cate: I think it's a good idea
            - Gilly: I agree, too; could be a special meeting if we have more pressing business
                - Gordon: next meeting may not be the time as Emily Potter will be here; important topic that we should discuss
- Accessibility
    - Gordon: would be beneficial to consider the needs of people with mobility disabilities and neurodiverse
        - DJ: would be an real opportunity for the contracted professional trail builders
        - Kelly: can reserve even one loop; accessibility also means more ramps than stairs, signs in braille, etc; can't do this for all trails, but should be considered, esp. when designing kiosks and signage
        - Roger: place it near to parking areas
        - Gabe: what about the bridge mentioned in last meeting?
            - Hayden: the bridge, is there to provide safer access to the rec fields, library and town center
        - Gordon: lots of the hillsides face route 15 which is noisy; maybe consider a quieter area for accessible trails; may required additional development
        - Roger: any grants available for ADA build outs?
            - Hayden: yes, there are state grants for such developments
            - Gordon: this is under the purview of our charter to identify potential funding sources
                - Luke: the RTP program; Sherry manages trail infrastructure projects; towns are at the top of the list; can

provide boiler plate for grant applications from other towns
                - Gilly: apps due in January
        - DJ: could we source a professional to consider needs, find grants, etc.? to make sure we don't overlook needs
            - USDA has a guidebook
            - ADA section 25, Equal access to parks and rec
            - RTP program application needs sponsors as well
        - Dave: access is determined by terrain; the bridge only allows for maintenance and logging
            - Roger: accessibility is usually carved out in the regs
            - Gordon: if we had to change land use, we should incorporate this into a grant application; we can find a way for this to happen
            - Luke: are we concerned about vandals? partying? those are the risks we might invite when we allow vehicles
                - DJ: it's good that we are considering this; it won't be able to be all things to all people
            - Gordon: we will continue to discuss this as we move forward with design process
- Gordon: we do have details that need to be addressed, and a future public involvement session (more feedback from the public)
    - Subcommittee to meet on June 22, 6pm at town office
- Hand-built bike trails
    - Gordon: Katie's Falls is a good example of how bikers can manage a resource for over 30 years
        - Mike: what's the surface?
            - Gordon: mixed
            - Gabe: very sandy area
    - Gordon: would love to give a guided tour for committee members; standing invitation; hoping that we can have hand-built trails beyond those constructed by Sinuosity
        - Cate: may want to separate biking trails from hiking trails
        - Luke: what kind of trails are Sinuosity building?
            - Gordon: multi-use
        - Hayden: it is multi-use, but they are planning on working with the community to build trails that the townspeople want
        - DJ: we will be getting a lot for the approved grant; we're primed to have a sweet trail network
        - Dave: this bridge is going to be a problem: never seen a bridge that has been permitted in less than 2 years

- Luke: has this process begun?
    - Hayden: not sure; but they are expected to drive this process under the scope of work, and to deliver a bridge before deadline
- Luke: any plans available for review?
    - Hayden: only the orig. documents planning documents; public input is requested to continue this planning process; will report back
- Luke: does this committee have any oversight on this budget?
    - Roger: no; Select board has authority
    - Hayden: and much of this has been already approved
    - Gordon: Sinuosity is specifically seeking public input for their process
        - Luke: it will be helpful in making determinations on the best way to spend these funds to hit our trail building goals
        - Gordon: the terms of the VOREC grant call out the school trail and bridge as a priority; we need an estimate from them to achieve that, so that we can understand how much is left
    - Dave: can I submit a proposal to build the bridge?
        - Hayden: there may be state requirements for oversight that I would need to research
            - Dave: we have experience, and have participated in builds along the rail trail
                - Luke: is this to accelerate the permitting process? it may or may not help, hard to say
            - Gordon: wouldn't that be a conflict of interest?
                - Kurt: no
                - Roger: no; this committee doesn't control that process; the bridge construction is outside of our charter
            - Dave: the school property part of the project could be done now; why isn't already going?

            - DJ: we should connect with Sinuosity, soon, to make sure everyone is on the same page
                - Gilly: I agree; the same with the mapping; we want to identify destination points
                - Roger: would fold into Sinuosity's request for a dedicated trails subcommittee as well
                    - Gordon: action item to follow up with Sinuosity, will communicate to the committee what we discover
    - Newsletter, new editor
        - Gordon: Maria stepped down from the committee; DJ, do you want to take it on, or should we open the floor?
            - DJ: happy to reach out to Maria and get permissions to take it on
                - we'll determine the need of how frequently we should publish
    - Open committee seats
        - Gordon: we have 16 seats in our charter, currently 3 seats are open; filled by the Select Board, but would like to talk to applicants first
            - Gilly: would be a good time to discuss diversity
                - Kelly: would be nice to have youth involvement; can post in FPF, as it was done before
                    - DJ: looking for diverse opinions, correct?
                    - Roger: may only come up if we have more interest than seats available; will reach out to Kurt Klein (town FPF contact)
                - Luke: do we have deficiencies in our group? who should we bring in to deepen our knowledge that will contribute to the project?
                    - Gordon: people who want to be here will likely self-select; may not get a fully round cross-section of the town
                - Joe: is this for the ongoing standing committee or this Stewardship Plan committee?
                    - Roger: just this committee
                    - Gordon: ongoing committee still needs to be approved
                - Cate: should we not seek an educator?
                    - Group: yes!
                - DJ: can use published agendas and meeting notes to inform potential candidates
                    - Roger: they are on the town website

- County forester engagement
    - Emily Potter would like to attend the July 13 meeting
        - Luke: there is a statutory req. for her to engaged, but workload may not allow for it; we have people ready to volunteer time, we should really consider this possibility
            - Hayden: for the forest management process she must be involved; but an FMP is not required to close on the property; looking to have her complete the form, but will likely need help
                - Gordon: as we have experienced people on the committee, how much forest management do we really need? should we locate money to hire a professional
                    - Mike: would be helpful if we had a logging company up there marking trees, etc; if you do a timber harvest, the town would make money, and opens up the forest for other activities
            - Luke: what is Emily providing?
                - Gordon: [ref. to email from Kate], that she will provide the documentation we need to close the sale
- Public engagement
    - Town BBQ, September 8

7. Upcoming events
    - NRLT Annual Meeting, Jun 11
        - Kate Wanner is the speaker
    - Craftsbury
        - Tools of the Trade (biodiversity), June 19
            - 11% growth in town population; how landowners can manage land to absorb some stresses
8. Adjourn (8:10 pm)